

end of the rope should be weighted and tossed up to the jumper.

- The jumper retrieves the reserve rope and snaplinks from the drogue chute.

Figure 2:

- If the jumper is not within reach of any branches or the trunk of the tree, the climber uses the rope to pull the jumper closer so he can reach a branch or the trunk for support.

- The jumper connects the snaplink to one of the riser assemblies, routes the second snaplink through the first, and connects it to one of the D-rings of the main lift web. (Or he may choose to route the climbing rope over a sturdy branch instead of through the riser assembly.)

- The jumper disconnects the waist band and removes the reserve parachute. He balls up the reserve and tosses it to the ground, making sure it does not snag on lower branches and get in his way as he descends.

- If his rucksack and weapon have not been jettisoned, the jumper may elect to use the climbing rope to lower them to the ground. This is particularly important if the jumper has sensitive or mission-essential equipment with him, or if the height is such that a fall may destroy the frame of his rucksack.

Figure 3:

- The recovery detail secures the running end of the rope and prepares to belay the jumper. The detail must consist of enough soldiers to control the jumper's body weight.

- The jumper tries to take his weight

off the parachute risers by grabbing or stepping on limbs or by wrapping his legs around the tree trunk.

- The jumper releases both cable-loop canopy release assemblies, one at a time. His weight is now supported by the belay team or by tree branches.

- The jumper climbs down the tree, using any available branches or the tree trunk. The belay team provides slack as needed. Or, if necessary, the belay team lowers the jumper to the ground.

Figure 4:

- If the jumper is higher than 60 feet (one-half of the climbing rope), the recovery detail may have to connect two ropes together. If the tree has a sturdy branch at a lower level, about mid-way down, this may not be necessary; the jumper can stop on this branch and re-route the climbing rope down from the riser assembly and over the branch before trying to descend the rest of the way.

The following are some additional comments on the technique:

In Figure 1, if the jumper realizes he can't reach the ground safely using the reserve, then he must release the reserve and lower it to the ground so it won't get tangled with other branches or the rope.

In Figures 1 and 4, the climber should attempt to reach the jumper by using the 120-foot rope to secure him and pull him to the tree trunk or a nearby branch. If the climber cannot do either of these things, he climbs to the point of attachment or above the jumper; secures the rope around a branch that will support the jumper using the rope with an end-of-line bowline with snaplink, and then

lowers the jumper. The jumper secures it to the left or right D-ring. The belay team takes up the slack in the rope, the jumper activates the riser assembly, and the belay team then lowers him to the ground safely.

In Figure 3, the recovery detail throws the 120-foot rope to the jumper, or a climber delivers it. The jumper takes one of the snaplinks and attaches it to the riser assembly or the male fitting of the riser assembly. The jumper routes the rope through the snaplink attached to the riser to prevent nylon-to-nylon contact between rope and riser assembly. He then releases both of the cable-loop canopy release assemblies, and the belay team lowers him to the ground safely.

This recovery technique can be conducted tactically and in limited visibility. If the expected drop zone is small or surrounded by tall trees, instruction on this technique should be part of the pre-jump training. Since many actual recoveries turn into fiascoes with white lights and loud commands, the tactical implications of this technique are obvious, especially if the jumping element is small or the loss of jumpers or secrecy will have an immediate effect on the tactical operation.

The most important consideration is to get the jumper out of the tree quickly, safely, and with as little damage as possible to his equipment.

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Ambush and Patrol Techniques

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR DWIGHT E. ANDERSON

The Vietnam War has been described as a squad leader's war and, in my case, it was. I served more than six months of my one-year tour in 1969 as a squad lead-

er in the 1st Marine Division. Many of the lessons we learned are still useful today.

A Marine rifle platoon at that time con-

sisted of three 11-man rifle squads, a 9-man machinegun squad (two M60s), and a platoon headquarters made up of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, ra-

dio telephone operator (RTO), and two Navy corpsmen as medics.

Normally, we operated as a platoon out of platoon patrol bases. The enemy we fought were mostly North Vietnamese Army (NVA) with a smattering of local Viet Cong (VC). They operated in small teams, massed only for a major attack, and then quickly dispersed again. We fought them in highland jungle terrain as well as in lowland rice paddies.

The squad tactics we used in patrols and ambushes were based on two assumptions—that we were always being watched and that, if we were being watched, we were probably being followed wherever we moved. These two assumptions are just as valid today for units operating in low-intensity conflicts

at various places around the world—or just going up against the opposing force at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC).

In Vietnam, most patrols consisted of a rifle squad and a machinegun team operating from the platoon patrol base. At night, the platoon sent out one squad-sized ambush and at least one fire-team-sized listening post. The squad that pulled the night ambush usually did a squad patrol in the morning; a second squad pulled the afternoon patrol, and the third secured the patrol base.

An average patrol in the lowlands was three to five kilometers long with three or four checkpoints, designated by the platoon leader. One purpose of the morning patrol was to select a site for the night

ambush. (A squad rarely ambushed at a site it had not seen in daylight.) Either the platoon leader or the squad leader chose the site.

An average patrol took three to four hours, and we spent part of that time trying to fool the enemy we assumed was watching and following us. The technique we used to do this was something we called a “drop-back” ambush. On a signal from the squad leader, two or more men—previously designated and scattered throughout the squad—would drop to the ground and cover to the rear. The squad would continue moving a few hundred meters and set up security. The drop-back team would remain in place 10 to 15 minutes and then rejoin the rest of the squad. This tactic was repeated two



Natural obstacles can often restrict patrols' movement, as seen in this 1965 photo of a squad patrol in Vietnam, by members of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

or three times on a normal patrol, and it was very effective, accounting for a good percentage of our kills.

When the squad came to the designated night ambush site, it again set up security while the squad leader and the team leaders determined the best way to conduct the ambush. Then the squad continued moving until it was a safe distance from the ambush site. The squad leader then got on the radio (each squad had an RTO with an AN/PRC-25), called the company's 60mm mortar section, and adjusted a target reference point (TRP) with smoke on the ambush site. The squad then completed the patrol and moved back to the patrol base to rest up for the night ambush.

At dusk, the squad moved out toward its night ambush site. (Marines call it a stinger site.) Just short of the listening pause site—similar to an objective release point (ORP) but not occupied—we used the same drop-back tactic to cover our rear from anyone who might be following. The squad moved into the listening pause site, waited for the drop-back team to rejoin it, and then, under cover of darkness, moved the last few hundred meters to the ambush site.

I realize that Field Manual 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, discusses only the "L" and the linear types of ambush formations, but we normally used a triangle formation. Both the L and the linear formations assume the enemy is coming only from a certain direction, and we learned never to assume anything about the NVA and the VC—except that they were all around us.

The two base positions of the triangle were oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach. The squad leader, the RTO, and the M60 gunner and assistant gunner were in the first position, and four riflemen were in the second. In the rear position were the M79 gunner with an illumination round loaded, a Navy corpsman, and two more riflemen. To cover the kill zone and the rear, each position put out at least one claymore, normally two.

Additionally, we placed M49 trip flares in the kill zone and on any avenue of approach to the rear. (We could emplace the trip flares in less than 45 seconds and

retrieve them even faster.) Today, of course, we have fantastic little night observation devices, and I only wish we had had them in Vietnam instead of the primitive starlight scopes. But I still love the M49 trip flare; it doesn't sleep, and it doesn't use batteries.

At night the enemy tended to move in small teams of two to four men. If they were going to attack an objective, these teams dispersed during movement, assembled to hit an objective, then dispersed again and moved back up into the hills. We also suspected that the local VC were acting as escorts for the NVA to get them past known U.S. Marine elements. Since the purpose of the ambushes was to kill these VC as they tried to move around at night, we had to use stealth and subterfuge in getting into our ambush sites.



The ambushes, when executed, were quick nasty affairs—trip flares, claymores, small arms, grenades, and a quick search of the bodies—and we did not stick around for long afterward. We moved back to the last listening pause (ORP) as quickly as stealth allowed. Once there, we put the trip flares and claymores back out and stayed at 100 percent security. We knew the enemy probably had other small groups moving through the area and hoped that when they heard our weapons fire they would filter over to check on their buddies. When they did, the squad leader called the mortars and fired the TRP he had registered during the morning patrol.

The patrol bases we operated from were the source of another technique that we called a "stay-back" ambush. Experience had taught us that the VC wasted no time checking out places we had stayed for a few days. They were great

scroungers and could use almost anything we might lose or throw away. To fool them, we left small, well-covered and concealed teams in the old patrol base. On one occasion, we boxed up all our C-Rations and stacked the cases while five Marines lay in wait, claymores ready. Within 45 minutes of the platoon's departure, a six-man NVA team carrying a mortar tube showed up. The first man came in, saw the C-Rations, and started calling for his buddies to share his good fortune. The rest I'm sure you can figure out.

When patrolling in the mountains, we found that the heavy vegetation restricted our movement to the trails. The NVA tried to evade us by simply getting off the trails, lying low, and allowing us to move through. Quite often, we had scout dogs, which the NVA hated—and for good reason: With the dogs around, they couldn't hide on the side of the trail. When we did not have scout dogs, we used a simple patrolling tactic:

We moved down the trail as a platoon, then stopped and put out an M60 to the front and another to the rear for security. Then every man cloverleafed both sides of the trail to his left and right. Then, with everyone back on the trail, we moved, halted, and repeated the process. Although this tactic was slow, it was effective for clearing an area of any enemy we might otherwise bypass in dense terrain.

I believe that other units in other situations will find these lessons and techniques just as relevant today as they were in Vietnam and just as relevant for Army infantrymen as for Marines. As our Army's missions take us to those remote areas where an elusive enemy must be found and engaged, the ambush and patrol techniques of 25 years ago can be as effective today as they were in that earlier war.

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